



Mayor Susan Mendenhall, Governor M. Jodi Rell, Senator Cathy Cook and Congressman Rob Simmons celebrating the saving of the Sub Base in Groton

## Fourteen Years of Accomplishments

*After fourteen years in the Senate, I have come to feel that the best government can do sometimes is to “Do No Harm.” But truthfully, I know many new laws have changed us for the better. Whether it is setting aside funds to preserve farmland and open space, working to improve water quality and cleaner air, or upgrading wastewater treatment to clean up Long Island Sound, we have made a difference. We have brought better education to our children, made dramatic improvements to the University of Connecticut, Eastern Connecticut State University and Three Rivers Community College. With you and many others we “Saved the Sub Base” and helped people across the state and the nation understand Connecticut’s commitment to our nation’s defense. We worked together to make a place in our towns and cities for people with disabilities because they are our family, our neighbors and they belong with us and among us, not in institutions far away.*

*I have loved my work on your behalf. It has truly been my honor to serve you.*

*Thank you!*

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*2006 Legislative Report to the 18th District*

State Senator  
**Cathy Cook**

State Senator

# Cathy Cook

Dear Friends,

*This is my last legislative letter to you. After fourteen years in the State Senate, I am not seeking re-election to this office. I want to thank you for the honor of serving as your senator. I am deeply grateful for your faith in my public service all these years. I have enjoyed sharing your hopes and dreams as well as our mutual concerns. I have especially enjoyed the time I have spent talking with the people of the 18th District.*

*Over the years, I have learned about your problems and proposed legislation to improve our state. Many of the ideas for new laws have come from you and your neighbors. Together, we have successfully developed new laws about job training, environmental quality, and improving our economy. We have encouraged tourism, biotechnology and our participation in the nation's defense. This year we developed ways to expand the film industry in our state. Our finest hours have come when we put politics aside and worked together for important goals like saving the Submarine Base and improving our schools.*

*Your support, the support of my colleagues in the legislature, and most of all, the support and encouragement of Governor M. Jodi Rell have made my work on your behalf a pleasure. I will always be grateful for your faith in me. As I move on to new challenges, I hope you will continue to call on me when I can help. I look forward to serving as your State Senator until my term ends in January, and my office in Hartford will remain open to assist you. As always, you can reach me toll-free at the Capitol at 1-800-842-1421 or send me your thoughts in e-mail to [Catherine.Cook@cga.ct.gov](mailto:Catherine.Cook@cga.ct.gov).*

*I am delighted to present this report of the 2006 Legislative Session.*

*Thank you for allowing me to serve your needs,*



Cathy Cook



## Making the State Better:

### ADVOCATING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

As a mother of my son, Caleb, who has Down Syndrome, I am a strong advocate for people with disabilities. Over the years, we have finally tackled the waiting list for group homes and other residential programs for people with mental retardation. This year we made two other significant strides. First, we set aside millions for supportive housing for people with mental illness who don't need institutionalization, but would benefit from social services and supports to live successfully in our communities. Second, I also succeeded in passing a new national model for helping people with disabilities enter the workforce. This program will give incentives in state contracting to employers who merge people with disabilities and people with other economic disadvantages into one employee pool.



Senator Cook with her son, Caleb

## Legislation for the Region:

### LOBSTER RESTORATION PROGRAM

The General Assembly adopted several important proposals for our region this year. We set aside \$1 million to restore the lobsters in Long Island Sound. I want to thank the scientists at UConn Avery Point, the Stonington Lobstermen's Association and the Noank fishermen for helping me craft the right solution to save both the lobsters and those who make their living on Long Island Sound.

### GETTING RID OF ABANDONED BOATS

I am also pleased to announce that the legislature adopted my bill to expedite the removal of abandoned boats that are derelict on the marshes and along our rivers. Thanks to Stonington First Selectman Bill Brown and the region's Harbormasters for working with the DEP, DOT and me to draft the best language to solve this problem.

### FILM PRODUCTION

We passed new tax incentives to encourage major film producers to bring their business to our region. I enjoyed working with the talented people at Sonalysts, North Stonington Studios and others in the film industry as we hammered out fair new policies. I am encouraged about the new opportunities for local careers in film technology.

### TAX SYSTEM STUDY

This year, as Senate Chairman of the legislature's bi-partisan Program Review and Investigations Committee, I led the first comprehensive study conducted in over two decades of all Connecticut taxes. We studied the good, the bad and the ugly from other states and learned that a good tax system must be balanced, with income taxes, property taxes and sales taxes each collecting about one-third of the revenues needed by government. Over time, our state has tipped out of balance, with your property taxes picking up more and more of the needs of government.

But we also learned that changing one tax only creates problems in other areas. Now that this huge study is complete, it is my hope that future legislatures will use its guidance for changes in tax policy. I continue to maintain that we collect enough from the people of our state, but we must use your money more efficiently.

### SHORT SESSION

This was the legislature's "short session," lasting only 85 days. We had to adjust the second year of the two year budget and address pressing economic issues for the state. As you know, the most important work of the legislature is to pass a responsible budget that is both fair and affordable. After lots of posturing, Republicans and Democrats were able to reach a compromise that cut some taxes, added assistance to offset higher energy costs and other needs, and most importantly, set aside significant funds for a Rainy Day. Due to time constraints, mostly, we were not able to complete work on eminent domain reform, fair contracting, major energy reforms, and probate court reform.

### STATE BUDGET

The \$16.1 billion state budget for 2006-07 stays under the required cap on spending, yet provides new funds to our towns for special education, road repairs and other municipal needs. We paid off the last of the high interest loans borrowed during the recession, and we made the first full contribution to the Teachers' Retirement Fund in two decades. We also were able to set aside hundreds of millions of dollars of surplus to bring the Rainy Day Fund to nearly \$1 billion.

*Albert Lognin, advocate for people with disabilities and Senator Cook celebrating the new workforce bill  
PA 06-129*

